Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

One thing we learn from general life is that things can be genuine or fake/imitation. So the $20 GoJiProJi that you buy online will not be as good as a GoPro. And sadly, it can be the same with those who claim to be Christians – not all those who claim to be Christians are genuine of true Christians.

* + - For example, the letters of the NT are full of references to ‘false prophets’ and ‘false apostles’ and ‘false teachers’ and ‘false brothers.’ They claimed to be the real deal but they were in fact false.
    - And in **Matthew 7** Jesus talks about those who on Judgment Day will say, “*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles*?” But Jesus will say to them, “*I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!*” So there are those who think that they truly are children of God who are not.

And this has many significant implications:

* + - For example, negatively:
      * In **1 John 4:1** it says, “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false [teachers] have gone out into the world*.” So we could be listening to a false teacher, which would not be good for us if we did not recognize it.
      * And in **1 Corinthians 5:11** believers are told not to associate with “*anyone who calls himself a brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler- not even to eat with such a one*.” So our fellowship requires more than that a person claims to be a brother or sister in Christ.
      * And soon we hope to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together.And in **1 Corinthians 11:27-29** it says, “*Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself*.” So if we do not examine our profession of faith we will eat and drink judgment on ourselves at the Supper.
    - But there are also positive implications of testing a profession of faith:
      * In **2 Corinthians 13:5** it says, “*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?- unless, of course, you fail to meet the test!*”So the positive result of this self-testing is that you know that Jesus Christ is in you. Does that sound like something that you want to know for sure? I am sure you would! I would!
      * And **1 John 5:13** is similar. John says, “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life*.” So the Lord wants His children to have assurance or certainty that they truly have eternal life. Again, does that sound like something that you want to be certain about? Of course it is. But this assurance belongs only to those who believe in the name of the Son of God. So surely we want to know that we believe in the name of the Son of God!? Yes?
      * And there is also the flip-side of what we said about the Lord’s Supper a moment ago. If we *do* examine ourselves before we come to the table and if we *do* recognize the body and blood of the Lord then we come to the table in a worthy manner, and instead of eating and drinking judgment on ourselves we are united with the body and blood of Jesus and filled with God’s grace. Do you want that certainty as you come to the Supper? I am sure you do! I do!

And it is particularly these last, positive implications of testing a profession of faith that we want to focus on today. And that is why our sermon theme is **the Blessing of Knowing that a Profession of faith is genuine**.

Well, the obvious next question is how do we test a profession of faith? And brothers and sisters, there is no better book to help us with this than 1 John. The congregation that John originally wrote this letter to had been through a split. A group had left the congregation claiming that they were the true children of God while those who stayed behind were not. And that left the group that remained behind doubting their salvation. So John wrote to them to show them that what they believed and how they lived revealed that they truly were children of God, and that what the group that had left believed and how they lived revealed that they were *not* in fellowship with God. And the way that John lays this out is with the three tests of ch. 2. And many commentators and preachers call them the **Moral** test, the **Social** test, and the **Theological** test.

But before we briefly consider each of these tests, it is very important that we understand that that these three tests do not make you a child of God, they show that you are a child of God. Look at v3, “*And by this we know that we have come to know Him*…” So what comes first is knowing Jesus. And then, once you know Jesus, these three things will come to characterize your life. It is like marriage – How do I know I am married? I have a wedding ring, my wife has the same surname as me, and we argue about where to squeeze the toothpaste tube. And this letter and the rest of the NT make clear that knowing Jesus is about belief or faith. **John 3:16**, “*For God so loved the world that He gave us His one and only Son that whoever* ***believes*** *in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*.” We enter into fellowship or relationship with God through faith. So these three tests are not about how we enter relationship with Jesus but about if we are in relationship with Jesus.

1. And the first of these tests is what we see in vv3-6, which many call the **Moral Test**: “*And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says "I know Him" but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* 
   1. Do we have a cadet or GEM here who can tell us the cadet verse? “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments (John 14:15)*.” So the moral test is really that simple. Followers of Jesus will be eager to keep His commandments – the things that the Bible says we must do are the things we will strive to do, and the things that the Bible says we must not do are the things that we will not want to do.
   2. And **our ultimate example in this is the Lord Jesus**. Look at **v5b-6**, “*By this we may be sure that we are in Him:* *Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked*.”
      1. A crucial part of our salvation is that Jesus obeyed every single one of the Father’s commands, His whole life long. And so, not only was our sin and guilt taken from us and put on Him and punished on the cross, His perfection/obedience/ righteousness is given to us when we believe.
      2. So it follows that we will surely want to walk as He walked, which means we will want to obey the commandments as He obeyed the commandments; we will want our priorities to be like His priorities, we will want out character to be like His character.
      3. Alexander the Great. Disobedient soldier named Alexander. Change your behaviour or change your name. A Christian must talk and behave as Jesus did.
      4. And this test is under increasing pressure today. As our world walks further and further away from God’s law, if we try and live according to the commandments of Jesus, we will be seen as ‘odd’ or ‘haters.’ But this was true in the days that John wrote this letter also – persecution.
2. Well, that brings us secondly to vv7-11 and what many call **the Social test**. And the passage begins with mention of a commandment that is old and new, which we won’t go into today, and it goes on to say in v9, “*Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling*.”And then later in ch. 4 this test is repeated as John says, “*If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen*.”
   1. And again, what this test is about is not difficult to understand, even though it can be difficult at times to do! Because every believer is a child of God, we cannot choose to love some of them or none of them; we must love them all.
   2. And if we want to know what love is, we have **1 Cor. 13**: “*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends*.”
   3. And if we want to know what love looks like, we look at Jesus: **Ephesians 5:25**, “*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*.” Did the church deserve Jesus’ love? No. We have to give ourselves. We have to sacrifice. You see, people at bowling clubs or quilting groups will be nice to others so long as they are nice to them. And if that is all that the church has to offer then we are no different than bowling clubs or quilting groups. But if we are kind to those *who do not deserve kindness*, if we are prepared to stoop down and lower ourselves and do thankless and sacrificial things for our brothers and sisters, like sharing a meal or delivering some baking or visiting someone in hospital someone who we may not know very well or who we disagree with about some issue, that is the Spirit of Christ at work and that will be attractive to the world.
3. And that brings us, thirdly and lastly, to vv22-25 and **the Theological Test**. “*Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father*.”
   1. The people who had left the congregation that John originally wrote to did not believe that Jesus was the eternal Son of God. They did not believe in the virgin birth. They did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead physically and that His death and resurrection are at the core of our salvation. They simply believed that Jesus was a good man who redeems mankind from his ignorance by setting him free to know the wisdom of the kingdom. So they talked about Jesus and they talked about kingdom and wisdom and resurrection and being born again, but they meant something entirely different than what the Bible means. The Jesus they preached was not the Jesus of the Bible. So John called them liars and deniers who did not have fellowship with the Father.
   2. So who does have fellowship with the Father? We see it at the end of v23, “**Whoever confesses the Son**.” So what does it mean to confess the Son? Well, look at v24: “*Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you*.” And what that means is the truth about Jesus that was preached by the Apostles, which for you and me today is what we read in the Bible. And the Bible teaches that:
      1. Jesus is eternal God.
      2. He was born of the Virgin Mary and He has a human nature just like ours, except for sin.
      3. He died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and He physically rose from the dead.
      4. And He has ascended into heaven and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
      5. So put simply, a genuine follower of Jesus loves the truth that the Bible proclaims about who Jesus is and what He did and will do.
   3. And notice that vv24-28 repeatedly use the word ‘**abides**,’ which other Bible versions have as ‘remains.’ So knowing the truth about Jesus is not a one-time tick list for when you profess your faith that you can then forget or ignore; it is something you continue to enjoy learning about and telling others about. (Home groups.)

So, if you love the commandments of God and you strive to obey them, as Jesus did, and you love your brothers and sisters, as Christ did, and you love the truth about Christ then you can be sure that your profession of faith is genuine. Is this true of you? Does your profession of faith pass the test?

And I hope that many of you today are able to say Yes – this is true of me. It is all glory to God and the work of His Spirit within me but I do love to keep His commandments and I do love my brothers and sisters and the truth about Christ. I know that Christ is in me! I know that I have eternal life! Hallelujah!

But if your answer is No, I do not love to keep His commandments and I do not love these brothers and sisters and the truth about Christ, then your profession of faith is false and you must humble yourself before God in confession and repentance, and believe in Christ today.

But it also possible that some of you have examined yourself and you just see a whole lot of disobedience and a lack of love for brothers and for the truth about Christ, but you are deeply troubled by this and very conscious of how you have offended Christ and His love for you. And if that is you, please look at **2:12**, “*I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake*.”

Pastor John was very aware of the fact that some believers would read these three tests and examine themselves and just see their sin and be led to doubt their salvation. But back in ch. 1, we read, “*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.” It is when you are not troubled by your sin and you don’t care about offending Christ that you have a problem. True Christians, on the other hand, as our Confession article puts it, understand that great weakness remains in them but “they appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, and death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have the forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him.”

And that is the message of the Lord’s Supper, isn’t it. We don’t come to this table because we are good enough; we come because Christ and His sacrifice are good enough. We come because He wants to remind us that His body was broken and His blood was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.” And if you know this and believe this is true for you, then you may know that you have eternal life. Amen.